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RTD UPDATES: Land Trusts

Data updates from the Resources and Technology Division

Economic Research Service
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Land Trusts Grow in Number and Acreage Protected

- In 1990, 881 local, State, and regional land trusts reported protection of 1.9 million acres nationwide through ownership, easement acquisition, transfer to other agencies, and other means.
- Of land trusts active in 1988, 42 percent had been established since 1980, 27 percent were established in the 1970s, and 20 percent were established in the 1960s.
- Forty-six percent of land trusts listed ecosystems or wildlife habitat among their three highest priorities, followed by open space with 38 percent and wetlands with 28 percent.
- Land trusts are concentrated in the Northeast, while acreage protected is highest in California.

This issue of RTD UPDATES summarizes results from a nationwide survey, conducted by the Land Trust Alliance, of the 881 local, State, and regional land trusts it identified as active in 1990. Land trusts are non-profit conservation organizations that protect land with valuable habitat, scenic, and other environmental characteristics through direct involvement in land transaction activities. Because of the Alliance's focus on local, State, and regional land trusts, the survey excluded national non-profit conservation organizations with similar goals and strategies, such as the Nature Conservancy and the American Farmland Trust.

The number of land trusts has grown rapidly since the early 1960s, when an estimated total of 100 land trusts were active (fig. 1).

Massachusetts and Connecticut, with 115 and 114 trusts respectively, had the greatest number of land trusts in 1990 (table 1). All but three states had at least one land trust. California had the greatest total acreage protected, 388,660 acres, while New Hampshire had the highest proportion of state area protected, 3.90 percent. Total acreage protected was 1.9 million acres, about 0.1 percent of US land area.

Land trusts protect a wide variety of land types, of which ecosystems or habitat are the most common (table 2).

Land trust numbers and acreage protected are highest in the Northeast and California, and lowest in the plains and mountain states (fig. 2).

Growth in land trust activity has continued since these data were collected in 1990. A recent subsample of the dataset's largest easement-holders by the Land Trust Alliance found that easement holdings had increased by 61 percent between 1990 and 1993. The Alliance is currently conducting a new nationwide survey; results will be available later this year.

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About RTD UPDATES

RTD UPDATES is a semimonthly series featuring data relating to agricultural resources, the environment, food safety, and technology. These UPDATES report recent data from surveys of farm operators and others knowledgeable about changing agricultural resource conditions, with only minimal interpretation or analysis. Please contact the individual listed at the end of the text for additional information about the data in this UPDATE. If you would like to be added to the mailing list or have other questions about RTD UPDATES, contact Richard Magleby, (202) 219-0436.

Figure 1--Active Land Trusts (1988)
by year of establishment

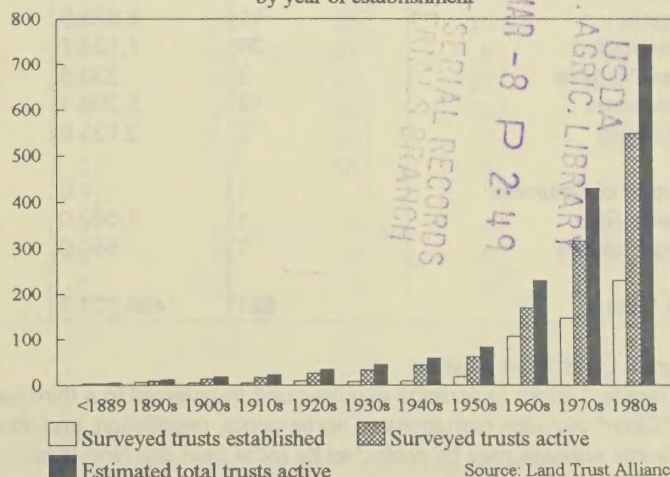


Table 1--Land protected by local, State, and regional land trusts in the United States, 1990

State	Number of land trusts	Means of land protection*					Total as a % of State area
		Ownership	Easement	Transfer	Other	Total	
		Acres protected					%
Alabama	4	18,564.0	0.0	538.0	2,435.0	21,537.0	0.07
Alaska	1	4.5	600.0	0.0	0.0	604.5	0.00
Arizona	4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
Arkansas	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
California	78	18,308.7	25,520.8	289,151.1	55,679.0	388,659.6	0.39
Colorado	16	4,956.5	9,840.0	1.0	9,931.0	24,728.5	0.04
Connecticut	114	22,625.0	5,770.0	2,557.0	4,564.0	35,516.0	1.14
Delaware	3	20,117.0	11.0	8,000.0	2,139.0	30,267.0	2.45
Florida	18	1,520.0	6,055.0	5,616.0	10,002.0	23,193.0	0.07
Georgia	3	132.0	11.0	0.0	1.0	144.0	0.00
Hawaii	2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
Idaho	3	1,795.0	11.0	560.0	100.0	2,466.0	0.00
Illinois	30	6,322.1	1,493.0	28,395.0	6,922.0	43,132.1	0.12
Indiana	5	126.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	136.0	0.00
Iowa	6	4,145.0	239.0	0.0	15,800.0	20,184.0	0.06
Kansas	2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
Kentucky	5	160.0	0.0	3.0	180.0	343.0	0.00
Louisiana	1	0.0	1,500.0	0.0	0.0	1,500.0	0.01
Maine	62	4,600.4	7,823.4	1,470.5	40,152.0	54,046.3	0.27
Maryland	31	6,673.0	33,485.0	133.0	868.0	41,159.0	0.65
Massachusetts	115	81,674.6	22,373.2	11,221.8	27,823.8	143,093.4	2.86
Michigan	21	14,489.4	694.4	583.0	1,702.2	17,469.0	0.05
Minnesota	4	425.0	0.0	1,400.0	0.0	1,825.0	0.00
Mississippi	1	0.0	5,540.0	0.0	0.0	5,540.0	0.02
Missouri	6	4,547.0	0.0	790.0	0.0	5,337.0	0.01
Montana	6	3,783.0	78,186.0	46,659.0	31,590.0	160,218.0	0.17
Nebraska	3	8,955.0	1,610.0	0.0	0.0	10,565.0	0.02
Nevada	1	13.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	17.0	0.00
New Hampshire	27	96,323.2	81,859.2	45,797.4	221.0	224,200.8	3.90
New Jersey	18	6,712.0	2,039.0	51,131.0	2,708.0	62,590.0	1.31
New Mexico	4	312.0	3,050.0	0.0	12,317.0	15,679.0	0.02
New York	62	16,576.6	23,136.8	10,034.0	21,208.6	70,956.0	0.23
North Carolina	15	2,635.0	1,016.5	728.0	26,377.0	30,756.5	0.10
North Dakota	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
Ohio	19	8,821.9	1,290.4	226.0	408.0	10,746.3	0.04
Oklahoma	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
Oregon	12	1,523.0	117.0	54.0	0.0	1,694.0	0.00
Pennsylvania	38	36,191.7	37,289.8	142,457.0	32,563.0	248,501.5	0.87
Rhode Island	29	5,778.5	1,900.0	115.2	408.0	8,201.7	1.22
South Carolina	8	1,642.0	517.0	9,011.0	100.0	11,270.0	0.06
South Dakota	1	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.5	1.5	0.00
Tennessee	9	2,314.0	1,600.0	260.0	9,956.0	14,130.0	0.05
Texas	10	1,109.5	4,566.0	164.5	4,045.0	9,885.0	0.01
Utah	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.00
Vermont	20	9,962.0	19,940.0	3,398.0	15,202.0	48,502.0	0.82
Virginia	11	6,573.5	60,270.0	2,784.2	555.0	70,182.7	0.28
Washington	26	7,124.7	4,034.0	1,072.0	4,048.5	16,279.2	0.04
West Virginia	2	230.5	213.0	3,677.5	5,868.0	9,989.0	0.06
Wisconsin	19	5,209.4	2,147.4	75.0	647.0	8,078.8	0.02
Wyoming	2	2,135.0	4,001.0	0.0	0.0	6,136.0	0.01
District of Columbia	1	1.0	10.0	0.0	0.0	11.0	na
Puerto Rico	1	1,062.0	42.0	0.0	4,596.0	5,700.0	na
Virgin Islands	1	550.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	550.0	na
US Total	881	436,723.7	449,812.9	668,063.2	351,121.6	1,905,721.4	0.08

Source: Land Trust Alliance.

* "Transfer" refers to acreage acquired and transferred to a third party for conservation purposes.

"Other" includes management agreements, negotiation, and other assistance.

Some acreage may be protected by more than one land trust.

Table 2--Types of land protected by local, State, and regional land trusts in the United States, 1990

State	Number of land trusts	Land types reported among highest three priorities*							
		Farmland	Wetlands	Habitat	Forest	Watershed	Open space	Recreation	Other
		Percentage of land trusts reporting							
Alabama	4	25	25	100	0	75	25	25	0
Alaska	1	0	0	0	100	0	0	100	0
Arizona	4	0	0	75	0	25	25	50	0
Arkansas	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
California	78	15	15	40	10	17	35	24	21
Colorado	16	31	13	56	19	19	50	25	31
Connecticut	114	7	32	39	19	16	48	27	17
Delaware	3	0	67	100	33	0	33	33	0
Florida	18	0	33	50	6	33	28	6	28
Georgia	3	0	33	33	0	33	33	0	67
Hawaii	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Idaho	3	33	0	33	0	0	33	67	0
Illinois	30	3	33	70	7	0	23	27	23
Indiana	5	0	40	40	0	0	20	0	20
Iowa	6	17	17	33	50	17	0	17	0
Kansas	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kentucky	5	0	20	40	0	0	80	20	60
Louisiana	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maine	62	10	27	48	16	39	45	27	19
Maryland	31	29	39	39	10	32	26	6	26
Massachussetts	115	12	37	43	18	23	44	20	18
Michigan	21	0	57	57	24	29	14	10	14
Minnesota	4	0	25	50	25	0	0	25	0
Mississippi	1	0	100	100	100	0	0	0	0
Missouri	6	0	17	67	50	0	17	17	33
Montana	6	33	0	67	0	0	17	0	17
Nebraska	3	0	33	100	33	0	0	33	33
Nevada	1	100	0	0	0	0	100	0	100
New Hampshire	27	19	15	41	37	30	41	26	15
New Jersey	18	22	28	50	17	11	44	11	11
New Mexico	4	50	0	0	25	25	50	0	0
New York	62	21	21	39	11	19	44	24	24
North Carolina	15	13	27	33	27	27	20	7	20
North Dakota	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ohio	19	21	16	79	37	5	37	16	16
Oklahoma	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Oregon	12	17	25	42	42	8	42	33	17
Pennsylvania	38	24	34	53	5	26	45	29	34
Rhode Island	29	17	28	52	7	21	41	10	31
South Carolina	8	0	25	25	13	13	50	13	25
South Dakota	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
Tennessee	9	22	11	67	33	11	44	22	11
Texas	10	0	40	60	10	0	30	40	50
Utah	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Vermont	20	40	5	15	35	10	30	20	15
Virginia	11	27	18	36	18	18	64	9	55
Washington	26	12	46	58	27	12	31	27	19
West Virginia	2	50	0	0	0	0	50	50	0
Wisconsin	19	5	42	53	11	21	26	11	16
Wyoming	2	0	0	50	0	0	50	0	0
District of Columbia	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
Puerto Rico	1	0	0	100	100	0	0	0	100
Virgin Islands	1	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0
US Total	881	14	28	46	17	19	38	21	21

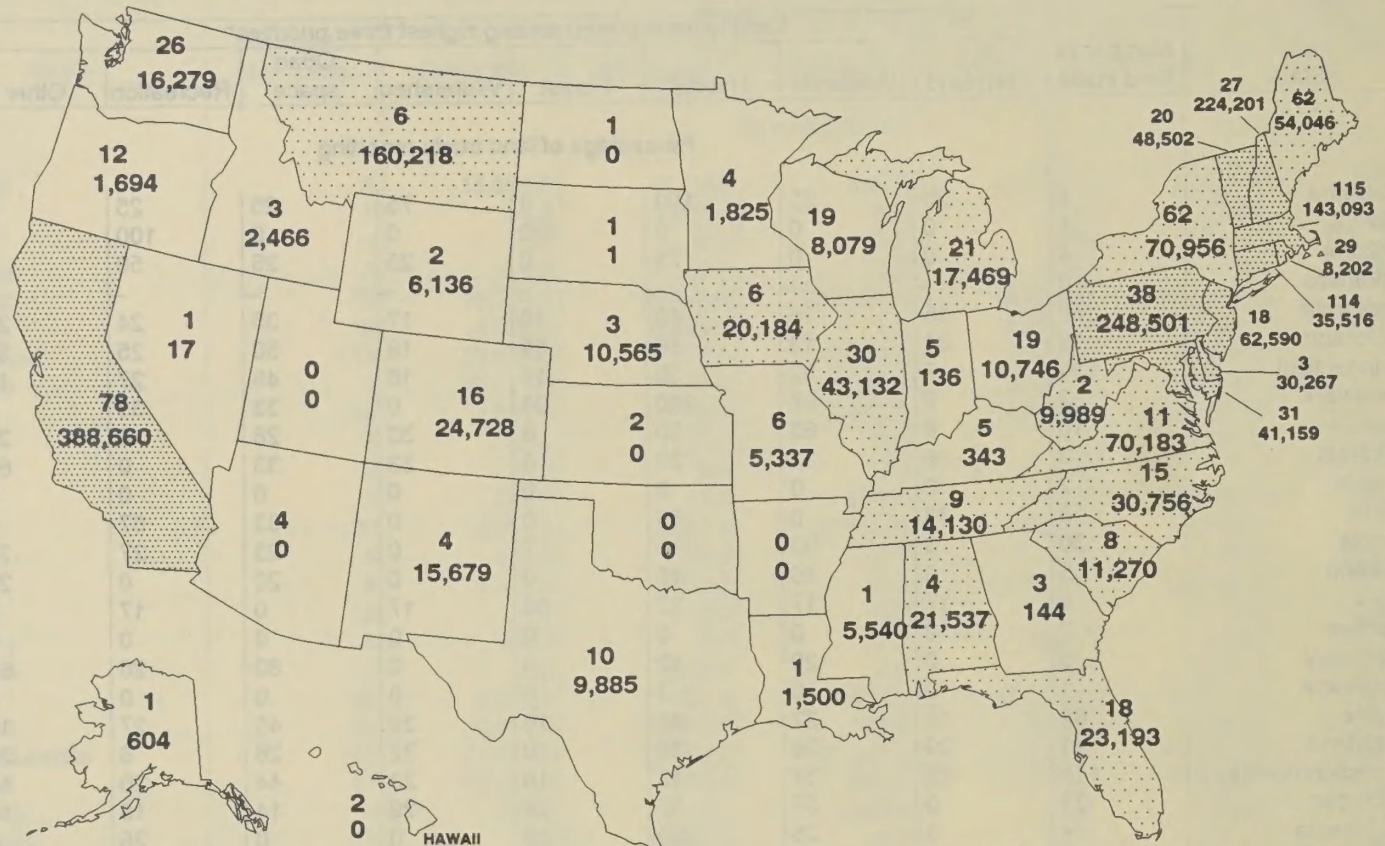
Source: Land Trust Alliance.

* "Farmland" includes ranchland; "Habitat" includes ecosystems, desert, and prairie;

"Watershed" includes lakes and coastlines; "Open space" includes scenic views, scenic roads, greenways, and gardens;

"Recreation" includes trails; "Other" includes historic, rail corridors, urban, archeological, and suburban sites.

Figure 2--Land protected by local, State, and regional land trusts, 1990



U.S.
 Top number: Number of land trusts 881
 Bottom number: Acreage protected 1,905,721
 Source: Land Trust Alliance.

Percent of State protected
 Less than .05
 .05 thru .30
 .30 to 4.00

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